

To: Garvin, Shawn[garvin.shawn@epa.gov]; Ryan, Daniel[Ryan.Daniel@epa.gov]; Early, William[Early.William@epa.gov]; D'Andrea, Michael[DANDREA.MICHAEL@EPA.GOV]; duteau, helen[Duteau.Helen@EPA.GOV]; Sternberg, David[Sternberg.David@epa.gov]; White, Terri-A[White.Terri-A@epa.gov]; Heron, Donna[Heron.Donna@epa.gov]; Smith, Bonnie[smith.bonnie@epa.gov]; Grundahl, Nancy[Grundahl.Nancy@epa.gov]; Miller, Linda[miller.linda@epa.gov]; Seneca, Roy[Seneca.Roy@epa.gov]; schaffer, joan[schaffer.joan@epa.gov]
From: Seneca, Roy
Sent: Fri 1/10/2014 2:29:09 PM
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Charleston Gazette

Thousands of residents warned to not use water

By Rachel Molenda

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Residents in eight counties and part of a ninth were told Thursday evening not to drink, cook with or wash with water supplied by West Virginia American Water after a leak earlier in the day at a chemical facility along the Elk River.

Any water supplied by West Virginia American Water in Kanawha, Putnam, Boone, Jackson and Lincoln counties was to be used only for flushing toilets and putting out fires, officials said just before 6 p.m. A couple hours later, Roane, Clay and Logan counties were added to the warning. The Culloden area of Cabell County was also affected. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin declared a state of emergency in all of those counties.

Customers of several public service districts, including Lincoln, Queen Shoals, Reamer, Culloden and Hurricane, were also told not to use their water.

The ban could affect more than 100,000 West Virginia American Water customers, including

restaurants, businesses and hospitals. Residents swarmed grocery stores, convenience stores and anywhere else with bottled water Thursday evening, and shelves were quickly depleted.

Hours after water company officials said their treatment facility -- which is near the leak site on the Elk River -- could handle the leak from Freedom Industries on Barlow Drive, Tomblin said: "Nobody really knows how dangerous it could be. However, it is in the system.

"It's just so important, according to the health department, as well as West Virginia American: Please don't drink, don't wash with, don't do anything with the water," the governor said Thursday night at the state Capitol.

Water was being transported into the affected counties, and emergency officials said they planned to set up distribution centers.

Col. Mike Cadle at the state Air National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing said 51 tractor-trailers loaded with water were headed to West Virginia from a Federal Emergency Management Agency facility in Maryland.

A C-130 cargo aircraft took off from Yeager Airport at 7:05 p.m. for Martinsburg to pick up the water. Cadle said that if the trucks arrived too late to fly the water in Thursday, the trucks would continue driving through the night and arrive at the 130th on Friday morning for distribution.

It was not clear Thursday night what time distribution centers would be set up today, but Lt. Col. Todd Harrell of the state National Guard said a center would be set up at the Charleston Civic Center to serve customers from Kanawha and Jackson counties. Another center would be set up at the Putnam County Courthouse in Winfield, he said.

Distribution centers would also be set up at the 911 center in Lincoln County, Queen Shoals in Clay County and the Sharples Volunteer Fire Department in Logan County, Harrell said.

Distribution points for Boone, Roane and Cabell counties were yet to be determined late Thursday.

A few places with water had already said they would let people fill up containers today, including Bartlett-Chapman Funeral Home in St. Albans, Chapman Funeral Home in Hurricane and the West Hamlin Volunteer Fire Department.

Schools had been ordered closed today in Kanawha, Putnam, Boone, Jackson, Clay and Lincoln counties as of 10 p.m. Thursday.

Tomblin said he expected the state of emergency to still be in effect this morning. He said it would stay until the state Department of Health and Human Resources, the Department of Environmental Protection and the water company say the water is safe.

He called the chemical -- 4-methylcyclohexane methanol, according to a DEP spokesman -- a "sudsing agent" and said, "It could take some time, they can't tell us how long it will take, to get

the system flushed clean because some of these pipes go out as far as 60 miles."

The chemical is used in the processing of coal.

Places that don't use water from West Virginia American Water are not affected. That includes the cities of Spencer and St. Albans, where Mayor Dick Calloway, whose city gets its water directly from the Coal River, said his town's residents would not fall under the "do not use" order.

Kanawha Sheriff Johnny Rutherford said the county's 911 center got about a dozen calls about citizens getting into scuffles over water at stores. County officials urged residents not to rush out to try to buy water, and police were asked to step up patrols around convenience stores.

Philip Toliver of Charleston came to the Rite-Aid on Charleston's East End because the one on Bridge Road had already sold out of bottled water, he said. He bought six cases.

"[I thought] 'I think I need to get some water,'" Toliver said upon learning of the chemical leak. He said if the state of emergency stretched on for more than a few days, he would consider leaving town for a while.

West Virginia American Water President Jeff McIntyre said at a news conference that the company was "fairly confident" earlier in the day that its plant could handle the treatment of the chemical.

"It's clear the chemical has infiltrated the water," McIntyre said. "In an abundance of caution, we are taking these steps today."

When asked what might happen if a person consumed the chemical, McIntyre didn't get specific, only saying "it's not particularly lethal in its usage form" and the effects of the chemical would depend on its concentration.

Dr. Rahul Gupta, chief health officer for the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, said restaurants, bars, day-care centers and other businesses with a health permit in Kanawha and Putnam counties would be sent a message to "cease operations immediately."

Gupta said there are about 1,200 health department permits issued in Kanawha County and about 300 in Putnam County, where the Kanawha department has temporarily taken over health enforcement duties.

Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper said the county emergency operations center was open and emergency crews were assessing their response.

"Earlier [Thursday], we were assured there was no harm to the public," Carper said. "We'll do blame-assignment later. Now we have to deal with it."

Carper said the do-not-use order would effectively shut down restaurants, nursing homes and any

other establishment that relies on water.

"I have been promised by the governor himself that we'll have any resources we need," he said. "I predict it's going to be a long night."

Mike Dorsey, director of emergency response and homeland security for the state Department of Environmental Protection, said his division learned of the incident around noon from Department of Environmental Protection air-quality officials -- who had received odor complaints about the facility as early as 7:30 a.m.

The DEP's air-quality officials discovered the spill -- which the company had not self-reported to regulatory agencies -- and called Dorsey's unit, which handles such matters for the DEP.

State investigators discovered the material was leaking from the bottom of a storage tank, and had overwhelmed a concrete dike meant to serve as "secondary containment" around the tank, Dorsey said.

"That was going over the hill into the river," Dorsey said. "Apparently, it had been leaking for some time. We just don't know how long."

The state Department of Homeland Security has contacted the Federal Emergency Management Agency to try to have more bottled water brought into the area, Tomblin said. Later Thursday, the governor said he'd spoken with FEMA's director, Craig Fugate.

Freedom Industries produces "freeze conditioning agents, dust control palliatives, flotation reagents [and] water treatment polymers," among other chemicals, according to its website.

Freedom Industries officials, including the company's president, Dennis Farrell, did not return repeated phone calls Thursday.

Earlier in the day, some emergency officials were saying they had found little information about potential toxic effects of the substance.

One material-safety data sheet, or MSDS, said, "no specific information is available ... regarding the toxic effects of this material for humans.

"However, exposure to any chemical should be kept to a minimum," the MSDS said. "Skin and eye contact may result in irritation. May be harmful if inhaled or ingested."

Less than three hours before the state of emergency was declared, an official statement from West Virginia American Water was issued assuring the public and news media that the spill "does not present a health risk to customers."

The water company announced an emergency news conference regarding the spill at 5:09 p.m. and Tomblin officially announced the state of emergency around 6 p.m.

"This is not a chemical that we deal with every day. It's not the type of thing we would see in dealing with a water treatment plant," McIntyre said. "We took some time to understand even what we were dealing with at the time."

McIntyre said the company will have to do "extensive flushing" to make sure the contaminant is out of its system. He couldn't say how long the process will take.

State Homeland Security Director Jimmy Gianato advised those customers with concerns of exposure or consumption of the chemical can call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222. If someone is obviously sick, they should go to the hospital or call 911, Gianato said.

House of Delegates spokeswoman Stacey Ruckle said the House wouldn't conduct any business today, and would reconvene at 1 p.m. Monday.

Staff members at Thomas Memorial and Saint Francis hospitals were told not to use water except for flushing the toilets, spokeswoman Paige Johnson said Thursday.

The hospitals have some bottled water on hand and they're getting more, Johnson said.

She didn't know of any patients coming to the hospital complaining of problems associated with drinking the contaminated water.

CAMC has canceled all procedures for today, officials said.

Meadowbrook Acres Nursing Center, a 60-bed nursing home in Charleston, was prepared, said administrator Kim Toney.

"We keep a three-day emergency supply, so we should be fine," Toney said. "We're planning for more but we've got enough to last until we can get more water in here."

At the Charleston Town Center Mall, marketing director Lisa McCracken said Thursday evening, "We've closed our restaurants and we closed our treateries. We've turned off all the public restroom faucets, and we have issued an advisory mall-wide to the tenants, telling them not to use the faucets in their establishments."

Crystal Del Giudice, a supervisor at the Starbucks coffee shop in the mall, said employees ran out to buy hand sanitizer so they could clean themselves up after they closed the store.

"It's like the apocalypse," she said, half-jokingly.

Several mall restaurants had signs posted, informing customers that they were closed because of the water emergency.

At the Kroger in Kanawha City, shelves in the bottled-water aisle were nearly bare. A Charleston police officer kept an eye on the crowd.

Kerstin Halstead of Campbells Creek was doing her regular shopping when her husband called and told her to buy water.

"People have been grabbing it like crazy," she said as she loaded two cases of bottled water into her SUV, "and some people were getting -- well, they could have shared more."

The East End Rite-Aid ran out of water just after 6:30 p.m., according to a store employee. Customers were buying ice instead.

Ruby Piscopo, 28, of Charleston, and Christi Pritt, 29, of Belle, were having an after-work drink when they heard about the chemical leak. "We started getting texts and changed the TV to the news," Piscopo said. "I wasn't concerned until someone said it could go on for days."

The two bought \$30 worth of water between them. They had other friends buying water throughout the city, with the intention of splitting it up later.

USA Today

Obama sends disaster aid to West Virginia

President Obama is sending federal assistance to West Virginia, where schools and businesses are closed after a chemical spill Thursday into a Charleston river.

"The President today declared an emergency exists in the State of West Virginia and ordered federal aid to supplement state and local response efforts," said an administration statement on Friday morning.

Under the order, the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency will coordinate efforts with local officials.

WOWK-TV Charleston

UPDATE: Do Not Use Water Order issued for WV counties after chemical leak

UPDATE:

Kanawha County Emergency Officials, in working with West Virginia American Water and the National Guard, have obtained water buffalos and water tankers to assist with the distribution of

water to Kanawha County residents.

Citizens will need to take their own containers, such as plastic bottles, jugs or pitches, to the sites to obtain the water.

Crossings Mall in Elkview and Riverside High School both have tankers available and additional locations will be set up within the next hour.

The South Charleston Recreation Center has opened as a water distribution center. Please bring your own containers to the site.

The Charleston Fire Department at Morris Street is distributing water as well.

Officials also are still trying to obtain bottled water for other distribution centers throughout the county, but if any elderly, disabled or ill residents need help accessing water, they should call the Kanawha County Emergency Operations Center at 304-746-8828.

Kanawha officials stress they will not deliver water to homes unless there is a serious medical issue, so if someone has a way to get to a water distribution center, they should.

UPDATE:

Pullman Plaza Hotel in Huntington, WV is opening three or four rooms to the public for showering. They ask that people bring their own towels and bathroom items.

The showers are free but donations are welcome. The hotel will also open its restaurants on Saturday, Jan. 11.

West Virginia American Water Spokeswoman Laura Jordan said a scientist with DuPont indicated that the chemical was still leaching, which means it's seeping from the bank to the river. More samples will be tested at DuPont at 8 a.m. Jan. 10, along with side-by-side comparisons of the water.

UPDATE:

C. W. Sigman, Kanawha County's deputy emergency management director, said the county is focusing right now to figure out how to keep hospitals and trauma centers running.

Sigman said based on the data he has, the chemical is "not particularly toxic, but you don't want to drink it or have it on your body." Sigman said it's diluted by the time it gets to the plant, but it's still not safe and that can depend on the concentration levels.

Officials stressed that hospitals and nursing homes will be the first priority.

In Putnam County, OES Director Frank Champan said just before 7 a.m. Jan. 10 the county was still waiting on its shipment of water from the state, but distribution sites had been planned from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at both the Hurricane Walmart in the back parking lot and the Hurricane Fire Department. People will need to bring their own containers to fill, and there will be a 20-gallon limit per person.

Chapman said more distribution sites could be added throughout the county once the water is received.

A news release from The White House Office of the Press Secretary just after 7 a.m. Jan. 10 stated President Obama signed a West Virginia Emergency Declaration, which authorizes the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate all disaster relief efforts. The news release states FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize and provide at its discretion equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency. The emergency protective measures, limited to direct federal assistance, will be provided at 75 percent federal funding.

UPDATE:

West Virginia American Water Spokesperson Laura Jordan said just after 5 a.m. Jan. 10 the company does not have conclusive results yet from any water quality testing.

Jordan said there is no way to treat water at this point, and the chemicals need to be eliminated through systematic flushing. As of 5:30 a.m. Jan. 10, Jordan said the flushing process had not yet begun, and the water was still being tested and there is no timeline yet to estimate when the water will be safe.

The company's president said just after 6 a.m. Jan. 10 West Virginia American Water attempted to treat the contamination itself between 1 and 4 p.m. Jan. 9 when the leak was detected, but the system became overwhelmed after that.

A report from Charleston Area Medical Center also indicated Friday morning its emergency room had treated approximately five people who reported symptoms of water contamination related to the chemical spill.

Medical professionals have indicated those people will be fine, but were warned to look out for nausea, skin and eye irritation and vomiting and hospital personnel will keep a close eye on them for the next 24 hours as well.

UPDATE:

According to Greg Lay, Director of Emergency Management of Boone County, water will be brought to the County Maintenance Garage, located at 36 Avenue B. in Mason County, sometime Friday and will then be first taken to hospitals and nursing homes, and will then be taken to all the fire departments and community centers throughout Boone County to be distributed.

Also, the Culloden Volunteer Fire Department in Cabell County is giving out bottled water, and will have a second shipment of water that is scheduled to arrive at 12 p.m. Friday. People who come then to get water are being asked to bring their own containers.

According to the Kanawha County Commission, public distribution points in Kanawha County are supposed to be announced early Friday, Jan. 10.

For a complete listing of water filling stations, [click here](#).

UPDATE:

According to a spokesman for Military Affairs and Public Safety, FEMA will be delivering water to the Charleston Air National Guard Base sometime Friday morning. It will then be distributed to the county emergency services offices and those agencies will distribute water to those communities affected.

UPDATE:

According to the CAMC Health System Twitter page, all scheduled procedures for Friday at CAMC General, Memorial, and Women and Children's Hospital are canceled. Also, they say they have not had to move any patients, but are on trauma diversion.

CAMC is saying that outpatient imaging procedures and appointments will take place as well as the WCH Infusion Center.

UPDATE:

There are several water filling stations available. They include:

Duval Volunteer Fire Department in Griffithsville, WV is giving out bottled water. They are limiting it to one per family as there are a lot of people affected.

Saint Marks Episcopal Church, at 405 B Street in Saint Albans, which will have a filling station

until 10:30 p.m.

(Click to view slideshow of Photos surrounding State of Emergency)

The West Hamlin Volunteer Fire Department in Lincoln County is also being used a water filling station. People are being asked to bring their own containers.

According to Chief Robert Stickler of the Hamlin Volunteer Fire Department in Lincoln County, they will be giving out one case of water to each household that arrives at their station, and will be open 24 hours a day until the emergency is lifted. Chief Stickley says that each household must show that they live in the affected areas.

The Crossing Baptist Church, in the area of Harrison Avenue, in St. Albans is remaining open so that people can come and get water.

Both the Bartlett-Chapman Funeral Home in St. Albans, and the Chapman Funeral Home in Hurricane will be open at 7 a.m. Friday, Jan. 10, for people who need water. People are being asked to bring their own containers.

We will also keep you updated on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

A list of water filling or distribution centers can be [found here](#).

UPDATE:

According to a news release from the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, Chief Justice Robin Jean Davis has ordered the Administrative Office and Chief Counsel's Office of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia to be closed on Friday, January 10, due to a water emergency. Employees in those offices have been asked not to report to work.

However, the Supreme Court Clerk's Office will be open on Friday to accept filings.

The news release says the Chief Circuit Judge in each affected county must decide whether to close courts in that county. The Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit Judge Jay M. Hoke has closed courts in Boone and Lincoln Counties for Friday, January 10.

UPDATE:

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin issued a State of Emergency for Boone, Cabell, Clay, Jackson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Putnam and Roane counties.

According to the Boone County Health Department, they are trying to close all restaurants, and

essentially anyplace that uses water, and are stressing that people should not use the water.

According to The Kanawha Charleston Animal Shelter, they are collecting donations of water for the animals housed at the shelter. They will begin collecting water Friday morning at 9 a.m.

The Kanawha County Commission says that the Kanawha County Courthouse Complex will be open tomorrow, Jan. 10.

We will also keep you updated on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

A list of water filling or distribution centers can be [found here](#).

UPDATE:

According to the authority of WVAWC, you can use water if you have St. Albans Water, City of Cedar Grove Water, Montgomery/Kanawha Fayette Water, East Bank City Water or Putnam PSD, as they are not affected.

An updated list of counties was released by the WV DHHR and those are Kanawha, Boone, Putnam, Jackson and Lincoln counties. This is only for customers of West Virginia American Water.

The WV DHHR also updated symptoms: severe burning in throat, severe eye irritation, non-stop vomiting, trouble breathing or severe skin irritation such as skin blistering.

Schools in Clay, Kanawha, Lincoln and Putnam will be closed on Jan. 10.

Saint Marks Episcopal Church at 405 B Street in Saint Albans will have a filling station until 10:30 p.m. The West Hamlin Volunteer Fire Department in Lincoln County is also being used as a water filling station. People are being asked to bring their own containers. The Crossing Baptist Church, in the area of Harrison Avenue, in St. Albans is remaining open so that people can come and get water. Both the Bartlett-Chapman Funeral Home in St. Albans, and the Chapman Funeral Home in Hurricane will be open at 7 a.m. Friday, Jan. 10, for people who need water.

UPDATE:

According to West Virginia American Water, due to a chemical leak of 4-methylcyclohexane methanol that went into the Elk River Thursday, a Do Not Use Water order has been issued for the counties of Boone, Jackson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Putnam, and Roane in WV. Only the Bomont and Queen Shoals areas of Clay County is affected, as well as the area of Culloden in Cabell County.

Residents living in these counties who use West Virginia American Water are being asked to not use tap water for drinking, cooking, washing, doing laundry, or bathing until further notice.

This only affects customers who use West Virginia American Water in these counties.

Customers in St. Albans and Cedar Grove are not affected by this. Putnam PSD customers are not affected.

However, the Lincoln County Public Service District says customers are being asked to not drink or use any water in the areas from Breedlover Road on Route 214 back towards Hamlin on Route 3 until further notice. They say that boiling water will not help.

It is believed that the material may be hazardous and may have entered the water system.

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin has declared a State of Emergency.

A spokesperson for West Virginia American Water says if you come into contact with the water and feel ill, call the Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Public health officials say symptoms would include nausea, vomiting, burning sensation, and severe eye irritation.

Keep checking wowktv.com for all the latest updates.

UPDATE:

West Virginia American Water released a statement on the chemical spill in Charleston, WV.

According to the release, the treatment facility's process is effective enough to remove contaminants but water quality experts are monitoring the process and will be in contact with the DEP and chemical supplier.

The water quality experts say the contaminates do not pose a health risk to the public.

ORIGINAL:

A chemical leak at Freedom Industries in Charleston, WV has crews working to clean up the non-toxic chemical.

According to a release from the Kanawha County Emergency Management Office, a chemical named 4-methylcyclohexane methanol, that is used in coal washing and preparation, leaked from a containment area into the Elk River.

Work crews and the DEP are working to clean the area. The chemical is considered non-toxic.

Residents in the area should go inside if they experience any signs of nausea.

Harrisburg Patriot-News

Editorial: Shale gas drilling: blameless bonanza or scorched-earth operation?

By Patriot-News Editorial Board

A recent report from the Associated Press notes that in four states, including Pennsylvania, authorities have received hundreds of complaints about contamination believed to come from shale gas drilling.

In most but not all cases, authorities found no link between gas drilling and the contamination. The confirmed cases are rare, but the number is not zero.

The main point of the AP story was that most states, including Pennsylvania, don't have good recordkeeping of the contamination complaints and investigations. Disorganized records make it hard to know how widespread any problems might be.

That point was made abundantly clear to Pennsylvanians earlier, thanks to reporting in May by Laura Legere of Scranton's Times-Tribune. She fought a long battle under the state's right to know law to get Department of Environmental Protection reports on drilling contamination cases. The state at first refused, saying records were so ad hoc and scattered, it was too burdensome to produce them.

Legere eventually found that "state environmental regulators determined that oil and gas development damaged the water supplies for at least 161 Pennsylvania homes, farms, churches and businesses."

When a water well is contaminated after drilling nearby, drillers typically argue that the problem was there before they began operations. Pennsylvania's Act 13, passed in 2012, may help on that score. It promotes baseline testing of drinking water supplies within 2,500 feet of a drilling site before drilling begins.

In cases where contamination is indisputable, the victims may get a settlement, but at a stiff price: They agree to a gag order and never talk about the case.

The Associated Press story featured Heather McMicken, a northeast Pennsylvania victim of gas drilling contamination who got a settlement that included a gag order. Forcing contamination victims into silence is one of the more troubling standard practices in the industry.

Other concerns include how convoys of trucks, along with huge diesel engines running drill rigs

and compressors, pollute what had been relatively clean air. Those compressors run 24/7/365, throwing noise far across what used to be quiet landscapes. Heavy truck traffic beats up rural roads, which were never built for such heavy use. Patches of woods and forest get clearcut to create new drill pads. Harmful chemicals or wastewater may be stored on drill sites, with less than vigilant oversight.

For all that, shale drilling also has a big upside. It produces a surge of well-paying jobs, lucrative royalty checks to those who own mineral rights, and a healthy boost in state and local tax receipts. The flood of natural gas from shale has driven down the price nationwide, saving consumers billions of dollars. Natural gas burns cleaner than oil or coal, and produces less of the carbon dioxide that speeds up global warming.

But many of those high-paying jobs go to highly-skilled, highly-mobile out-of-state workers. Some royalty owners complain about being shortchanged on their royalty checks. Pennsylvania could net even more tax money, because it doesn't charge the kind of taxes the industry commonly bears elsewhere. And using more natural gas produces troublesome emissions of methane, a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

The bottom line: Shale gas drilling is neither the nearly-blameless business bonanza the industry's defenders would have you believe, nor a scorched-earth operation that lays waste to whatever it touches, as strident opponents contend.

It is an intensive industrial operation that produces a valuable source of affordable energy for the nation and new wealth for a lucky few, while wreaking significant change on rural landscapes and causing troublesome fallout on many social and environmental fronts.

Shale drilling requires close, careful but not stifling oversight at federal, state and local levels — something it has yet to get here in Pennsylvania.

Wilkes-Barre Times Leader

COMMENTARY: SEN. JOHN YUDICHAK Pa. can gain from natural gas tax

“By any reasonable account, the exploitation of the Marcellus Shale Formation will produce a detrimental effect on the environment, on the people, their children, and future generations, and potentially on the public purse, perhaps rivaling the environmental effects of coal extraction.”

You might suspect the quotation referenced here is pulled from the website of an environmental advocacy group; but, it comes from the pen of Chief Justice Ron Castille, a Republican jurist, who recently joined the majority opinion of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court as it struck down as unconstitutional the provisions of Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale law, Act 13, that virtually eliminated the role of local governments in protecting the environment by adopting local zoning

ordinances to regulate the oil and gas industry.

As the Democratic chairman of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, I joined my Senate Democratic colleagues in vigorously fighting against the evisceration of local zoning rights that Act 13 proposed. The Supreme Court's recent decision is welcome news to local governments and I am certain they would discourage the administration's latest attempt to reverse the court opinion and decades of local zoning rights.

As the grandson and son of men who labored in the anthracite coal fields of Northeastern Pennsylvania, I am all too familiar with the legacy of an industry that was not responsibly regulated or paid its fair share of taxes. Chief Justice Castille's reference to the environmental impact of the coal industry is not a whimsical historical footnote for those of us who live in the shadow of king coal. The legacy of coal is a stark reality that impacts our forests, rivers and streams to this very day. Pennsylvania taxpayers, many of whom never saw an active anthracite mine, will be paying their hard-earned tax dollars to remediate the abandon coal lands and polluted acid mine drainage waterways for generations to come. We can get Pennsylvania's second chance at leading an energy revolution right — through smart laws and regulations that protect the environment and place responsible taxes on the volume of gas produced that will ensure as the natural gas industry grows, Pennsylvania grows along with it.

Last legislative session, I proposed legislation that would have implemented a fair and progressive severance tax on natural gas. The 3 percent natural gas severance tax was based on production, so state revenue would increase as well production increased. It is tax policy that better reflects the true economics of the Marcellus Shale play, and better positions the commonwealth to benefit from the wealth of its natural resources.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the commonwealth's natural gas production rose 69 percent in 2012, and yet Pennsylvania's Act 13 impact fee generated less revenue — a trend that is likely to continue as fewer wells are drilled and the volume of production increases. With natural gas, coal, nuclear, wind and solar power, Pennsylvania has an energy portfolio that not only rivals most states, but it rivals most nations around the globe. Pennsylvania needs a comprehensive energy policy to responsibly develop our natural resources and build an affordable energy infrastructure for bolstering our housing, manufacturing and technology-driven industries in Pennsylvania.

If we are going to unleash the true potential of the Marcellus Shale play in Pennsylvania, we must learn from the mistakes of the coal era and not sell short the people of Pennsylvania and their abundant natural resources. Pennsylvania needs to fully engage in the development of energy policies that will enact a responsible severance tax and reasonable regulations that best position the commonwealth to protect the environment while leveraging long-term economic opportunities from the oil and gas industry.

Baltimore Sun

Group says Maryland backsliding in bay cleanup

By Tim Wheeler

2:34 p.m. EST, January 9, 2014

Nitrogen pollution from Maryland sewage plants and industries increased in 2012, a new report says, partially undermining gains the state has made in prior years in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay.

While nitrogen discharges from treatment plants and factories declined overall across the six-state bay watershed from 2011 to 2012, they grew in Maryland, Delaware and New York, according to the [Environmental Integrity Project](#), a Washington-based watchdog group.

Analyzing publicly available data from state agencies and the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), the group found that nitrogen discharges from plants in Maryland were more than 400,000 pounds higher in 2012 than the year before. In Virginia, by comparison, nitrogen pollution from sewage plants and factories dropped by more than 1 million pounds the same year.

Tarah Heinzen, a lawyer with the environmental group, said it's not entirely clear why nitrogen pollution may have increased in Maryland. But she noted that collectively the state's sewage plants and industries violated their permit limits on nitrogen discharges in 2012 by more than 300,000 pounds.

"Maryland was making very good progress between 2010 and 2011," Heinzen said, "and that progress seems to have essentially stopped between 2011 and 2012."

Jay Apperson, spokesman for the Maryland Department of the Environment, said state officials are unable to verify the group's data, and that figures they have on wastewater treatment plants indicate there have been decreases in nutrient pollution both years.

According to the group's report, three wastewater treatment plants - in Salisbury, Frederick and on Ballenger Creek in Frederick County - collectively accounted for more than two-thirds of the nitrogen discharge violations in Maryland. Sewage overflows also flushed nearly 34,000 pounds of nitrogen into streams and the bay that year.

While the six bay states and the District of Columbia have made progress overall in reducing discharges of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediments - the pollutants blamed for algae blooms and dead zones in the Chesapeake - none has cut enough yet to meet limits set under the bay "pollution diet" imposed by the EPA more than three years ago.

"Unfortunately, violations of permit limits for nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment remain common throughout the Bay states, even for significant dischargers," the report says. The group called for regulators to crack down on chronic violators and tighten discharge permits.

“As significant pollution reductions become more difficult and expensive to achieve, addressing illegal discharges and poor data reporting at these plants will become increasingly critical,” Heinzen said in a statement released with the report.

But Apperson disputed the group's contention that there's been any letup in Maryland's efforts to reduce pollution. More than 30 sewage treatment plants have been upgraded to remove more nitrogen and phosphorus, he said, and upgrades are in the works for a similar number of plants. State officials are enforcing facilities' discharge permits, he added, and where there are problems have legal agreements in place "to ensure that improvements are made in a timely manner."

"Any suggestion that the level of enforcement of permits for municipal and industrial sewage treatment plants jeopardizes Maryland's efforts to clean up the Bay is off base," he said.

Greenwire

Chesapeake Bay: Illegal discharges hamper cleanup efforts -- report

By Amanda Peterka, E&E reporter

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Progress in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay has been slowed by illegal discharges from industrial and municipal sources of pollution, according to a report issued today by the Environmental Integrity Project.

Eight percent of large industrial and municipal facilities in the six bay states violated nitrogen-based permit limits for at least a quarter of 2012, the report found. Seven large dischargers in Pennsylvania and Maryland exceeded nitrogen permit limits by more than 50,000 pounds that year.

Some chronic violators amassed dozens of permit violations for nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment in 2012. The wastewater treatment plant in Rising Sun, Md., exceeded its permitted nitrogen discharge limit 116 times that year, according to the report.

Industrial and municipal facilities are required to reduce their contribution to nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the Chesapeake Bay 25 percent by 2025 under the cleanup plan agreed to four years ago by U.S. EPA and the six bay states.

"2012 progress reducing industrial and municipal pollution in key Chesapeake Bay states is

encouraging, but we need to do more if we want to stay on track," said Environmental Integrity Project attorney Tarah Heinzen. "Nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution continues to degrade the water quality and fisheries of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries each year."

Industrial plants account for about 20 percent of the nitrogen and a quarter of the phosphorus that yearly ends up in the Chesapeake Bay. When excess nutrients enter the bay, they create a dead zone devoid of oxygen that chokes out fish and other aquatic life.

The report today is an update of the Environmental Integrity Project's 2012 analysis of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from facilities such as wastewater treatment plants, local government buildings, electricity companies and other businesses. For the update, the Environment Integrity Project said it used public data obtained from EPA and Chesapeake Bay states.

The environmental group found some states made progress in reducing the amount of nitrogen entering the Chesapeake Bay from industrial and municipal facilities. Virginia reduced its nitrogen discharges by more than 1 million pounds, while Pennsylvania overall decreased its nitrogen loads from facilities by 16 percent in 2012.

The report, though, found that in 2012, nitrogen discharges from industrial and municipal facilities increased in Maryland by 400,000 pounds, reversing the state's progress in reducing the amount of nitrogen entering the bay.

The Environmental Integrity Project also found that more than a third of permits -- or those for nearly 2,030 industrial and municipal facilities -- are currently expired across the Chesapeake Bay region, according to a review of Clean Water Act permits in effect in November 2013.

"Many states allow discharge permits to expire without timely renewals, or adopt the practice of 'administratively continuing' the permit without revisions, a review, or a public notice and comment process," the report found.

Philadelphia Inquirer

GW Bridge jams had eco-fallout, too: more air pollution

By Sandy Bauers, *Inquirer GreenSpace Columnist*

Posted: Thursday, January 9, 2014, 1:14 PM

The New Jersey Sierra Club, which rarely misses a chance to jump into a fray, has added an environmental element to the Christie administration crisis over the lane closures on the George Washington Bridge last fall.

The traffic jams, which lasted for four days, "had direct impacts on air pollution," notes the organization in a press release.

So even if you weren't one of the school children, ambulance patients or others stuck in the road congestion, if you were nearby, you likely were breathing dirtier air.

"During the December 11th Port Authority meeting they reported 2,800 hours as the amount of time people spent in traffic during this lane closure, which we believe is on the low side," the Sierra Club noted.

By their calculations, about 35,000 to 40,000 pounds of air pollution was emitted during that time. "This is the average for cars and light trucks, which does not include regular trucks or diesel," the organization said.

Fine particulates are among the most worrisome air pollutants because they can be breathed deep into the lungs and often carry other harmful chemicals, such as the carcinogen benzene, with them.

In addition, "This traffic jam caused about 1,400 to 1,500 in wasted gallons of gasoline costing drivers around \$5,000."

The organization said those numbers are for the traffic on the George Washington Bridge only "and do not include traffic within Fort Lee and around the town."

"Bridge Gate actually had environmentally consequences. It meant more people stuck in traffic breathing in more pollution, wasting gasoline, and spending money. It is not just about a traffic jam, but there was a significant increase in air pollution on a bad air day threatening the health of New Jersey residents," said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, in a press release.

Richmond Times-Dispatch

EPA investigating possible cancer-causing contamination in Sandston

BY REX SPRINGSTON

Richmond Times-Dispatch | Posted: Thursday, January 9, 2014 11:47 am

SANDSTON — The Environmental Protection Agency is investigating the possibility that underground water in eastern Henrico County's Sandston area is contaminated with an industrial pollutant suspected of causing cancer.

The federal agency is trying to determine if people are being exposed to tetrachloroethene, a chemical used in some dry cleaning operations as well as industrial solvents and grease cleaners.

“Recent groundwater samples show signs of tetrachloroethene...It is a suspected carcinogen and long-term exposure to elevated levels can cause potential health risks,” according to a flier that EPA created for Sandston area residents.

Most people in the area drink from a public water supply, not wells, according to the EPA.

“Public water supplies are routinely tested and must meet federal Safe Drinking Water Act standards,” the flyer said.

However, the EPA said it would like to collect water samples from private wells that are used for drinking or irrigation.

The EPA is also looking into possible “vapor intrusion” by the pollutant. That can happen when chemicals in groundwater create vapors that come up through the soil into buildings and homes.

The area under investigation stretches from just south of East Williamsburg Road to the south, to just east of Garland Avenue to the east, to just north of Federal Street to the north, to just west of Naglee Avenue to the west.

Trish Taylor, an EPA community involvement coordinator listed on the flier as a contact for people with questions, had no comment this morning. “I’m looking for information,” she said. “I really don’t have a lot of information to give out.”

Taylor referred The Times-Dispatch to an EPA public affairs officer, who was not immediately available.

Bill Hayden, a spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Quality, said EPA officials are passing out the flyers in the Sandston area.

Hayden said he is working to get more details about the case.

The DEQ is working with the EPA, but the EPA is taking the lead because the federal agency has greater resources to conduct an investigation, Hayden said.

State Impact Pennsylvania

Scientists document gas development disturbing forest ecosystems

By Marie Cusick

Pennsylvania is no stranger to extractive industries—like coal and timber. By the early twentieth century its forests were decimated. Today they’ve grown back and trees are harvested in a sustainable manner.

But scientists say the state’s surge in natural gas development is having new kinds of dramatic effects on its forests.

“Industrial infrastructure”

Kevin Heatley lives in Lycoming County and has spent years hiking in the Tiadaghton State Forest . He’s an ecologist by trade. As he stands next to a freshly cleared patch of forest, he’s disturbed by what he sees.

“Everything from the noise and the traffic to the lighting, to the pad placements, to the pipeline construction to the road expansion,” he says. “This is all industrial infrastructure. It’s inherently incompatible with sustainable forest management.”

It’s called forest fragmentation. It’s what happens when human development crisscrosses the landscape, carving up large swaths of contiguous forest into smaller pieces.

The U.S. Geological Survey has found most of the disturbance from Lycoming County’s gas drilling is happening in sensitive ecosystems known as core forests.

These areas are very different from edge habitat— that’s forest next to something else, like a grassy field, or a suburban home.

Big tracts of core forests are less common, and they’re home to species that don’t do well near people.

Margaret Brittingham is a professor of Wildlife Resources at Penn State University who’s also studied forest fragmentation. She says when core forest is lost, so are the host of important services its plant and animal species provide.

“Insect control, climate control, water purification, you can go on and on,” she says. “Recreation, aesthetics.”

Pennsylvania currently has 2.2 million acres of public forest land. About 700,000 acres are available for oil and gas development.

Seneca Resources is one of the largest and most active drillers in state forests. Spokesman Rob Boulware says the company works to minimize forest fragmentation. For example, it tries to use existing roads instead of building new ones.

He points out other industries cut down plenty of trees too.

“If [forest fragmentation] is a concern, and there are people who will debate and evaluate this—it’s a concern for all activity that we are engaged in as humans,” says Boulware. “Not just the activity that’s being engaged in through the oil and gas industry.”

Endangered species bill stirs controversy

The state’s gas industry is pushing a new measure that may lead to more forest fragmentation. Drillers are backing a bill that would limit the authority of state agencies to designate endangered species.

Boulware argues it’s a matter of consistency for businesses. For example, he says companies are sometimes required to conduct expensive and time consuming wildlife surveys before they begin drilling.

“These are little things that companies are looking for that would be companies are looking for that would be cost-savings for each individual, and that’s what you don’t have with the current system.”

State Rep. Jeff Pyle (R- Armstrong) is sponsoring the bill. He says the agencies involved in endangered species designations— like the Game Commission— shouldn’t hinder economic development.

“The problem we have is our missions are conflicting,” he says. “Their mission is to protect the game species of Pennsylvania. As a legislator, part of my mission is to make sure my people don’t see widespread unemployment.”

As the pace of Pennsylvania’s gas production continues to surge, energy markets will dictate how much development occurs. Scientists say the key question is how much disturbance forests can withstand.

State developing forest monitoring report

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), which is charged with overseeing public forest land, has spent four years and about eight million dollars on a monitoring program to examine how gas drilling is affecting the forests.

Although the program was launched in 2010, the agency has not released any details about its monitoring efforts and recently denied a Right To Know Law request by StateImpact Pennsylvania to obtain more information.

DCNR spokeswoman Chris Novak says the department expects to release an initial report in the next few months with subsequent reports coming out every couple of years.

“This is a long-term effort. It took some time to hire staff and establish protocols,” she says. “We

don't have a specific [release] date at this point.”

Washington Post

Low morale of federal employees is putting a crimp in charitable giving

By Joe Davidson, Published: January 9

When federal employees are mired in the muck of low morale, the effect can be found in more places than office cubicles.

The impact of that and their thinner wallets hurts their charitable giving.

It's dropping — *again*.

And in a big way.

In recent years, contributions to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) of the National Capital Area, which sends federal employee donations to area charities, have fallen. Things look even worse for the 2013-14 campaign, which ends Wednesday.

As of Thursday, the campaign pulled in about \$40 million, said Kalman Stein, president and chief executive of EarthShare, a federation of environmental and conservation charities that currently administers the local CFC.

“That’s great, but last year the campaign did \$62 million, and it looks like we will fall \$10-\$12 million short this year thanks to the low morale of the federal employees. That’s understandable, but the decline in donations will impact more than 2,000 local charities and another 2,500 national ones, as well as the people they serve.”

The \$61.6 million raised during the 2012-13 campaign was a 4.5 percent drop from the previous year, which was down from the year before that. If Stein’s projections are correct, this year’s take will be off by up to 20 percent. Also telling is the lower number of employees who contributed during the 2012-13 campaign: Almost 20,000 fewer donated than the year before.

The situation across the country is no better.

“It looks like the CFC will be down nationally to under \$200 million from \$258 million last year,” Stein said. “That is a huge loss for charities — no other way to put it.”

Directly tied to the morale factor is the three-year freeze on basic pay rates that is just now

ending for most feds. And about 200,000 wage grade workers didn't get the 1 percent hike others did. Many staffers also suffered a pay cut through unpaid furlough days last year.

"When I was deciding to make my CFC contribution this year, I had to take into account that I took a 5 percent pay cut last year," said Bruce Andersen, a Labor Department policy analyst. "I still gave, but I did scale back a bit to reflect the fact that I lost pay this year. . . . Many people are upset that the federal government got treated so shabbily. The morale here at the department has cratered."

That's not good for the workplace, and it's not good for the charities the workers support.

A significant cut in donations means that some "local children and adults . . . will continue to sleep on floors and live in apartments that are not fit for raising children," said Mark Bergel, founder and executive director of A Wider Circle in Silver Spring, a group whose mission is to end poverty. "That is what I often see before our services are rendered."

Father John Adams, president of SOME (So Others Might Eat) on O Street NW, said that CFC funding provides "more than 400,000 hot meals to poor and homeless families and single adults in our dining rooms and rehabilitative programs" as well as health care to "more than 1,000 ill, poor and homeless patients."

Despite the lower participation rates, "federal employees are givers. Service is in their DNA," said Stephen M. Delfin, president and chief executive of America's Charities, a federation of local and national charitable organizations based in Chantilly.

"But until the CFC is integrated into broader federal employee engagement," he added, "it will be a siloed activity, driven by compliance and regulations, and not realize its true potential as a way to positively engage employees, raise money for charities and — let's not forget — lessen the burden of government."

One way to enhance that engagement, he suggested, is to regularly provide givers information about the charities that are supported. Now, "the CFC is entirely focused on a fundraising sprint with little ability to communicate with employees about the impact of the gifts on a year-round basis," he said. "Thus the 'campaign' becomes disconnected from broader federal agency employee and community engagement strategy."

None of this should take away from the fact that hundreds of thousands of federal employees continue to contribute millions to CFC charities in the Washington region alone. Yet the CFC cannot afford to lose people like J. Michael McManus, an international economist at the Labor Department. He once was a CFC "key worker," someone who encouraged colleagues to give. Now he's among those who have dropped out, at least for now.

"We're just not that inclined to give to charity when in fact we get locked out of work, we don't get pay raises," he said. "This should be a no-brainer."

Philadelphia Inquirer

Behind the Crest: The Wade Site

By Wm Murphy, SBNation

PPL Park's LOT A has a checkered past and a place in the History of Chester that should not be forgotten, for better or for worse. The parking lot's former life as one of the worst toxic waste dumps in American history helped cause the creation of the Superfund site designation, but it's heroes have yet to be honored properly.

The current site that PPL Park's A lot occupies is still known to locals as the Wade Site. It began being called that after one of the worst non-nuclear environmental incidents in the United States occurred there in 1978.

The site was initially the location of a rubber recycling plant known as Eastern Rubber Reclaiming. It operated as that from the 1950's until the 1970's. Sometime in the mid- to late-1970's it became an illegal industrial waste dump, and operated that way until 1978.

On February 2, 1978 there was a fire at the Eastern Rubber Reclaiming site. As is the usual practice with working fires, police, firefighters and EMS responded to the scene. It was apparent from the start that this was no ordinary tire fire. The EPA estimated after the fact that as much as 3 million gallons of hazardous industrial waste was being illegally dumped and stored on site. The fire quickly became multi-jurisdictional and drew first responders not only from the City of Chester, but also from surrounding departments as well. It's reported that "230 Chester firefighters and other emergency workers were involved" in the response to the blaze.

This incident, in conjunction with similar incidents that occurred around the same time period, were responsible for the creation of the "Super Fund" designation by the EPA.

The Eastern Rubber Reclaiming fire had lasting repercussions that are still being managed to this day. This is far from a closed incident. The environmental remediation of the site took almost 15 years and tens of millions of dollars to correct. The EPA removed the Wade Site from its list of contaminated sites in March of 1989.

The human toll runs much deeper. Approximately 200 first responders worked that "job", to use the terminology of the first responder community. As a result of their services, many of them became ill from exposure to the chemicals illegally disposed of and stored there. The definitive report on the subject appeared in an eight part series in the Philadelphia Inquirer in 2000, and was written by award winning reporters Susan Q. Stranahan and Larry King. The article reports that "Serious illnesses - cancer, vascular and neuromuscular disorders, kidney failure - have afflicted at least 45, about one in five. Of those, 28 are dead."

The original site clean up was conducted in November of 1983 by Roy F. Weston Inc., the predecessor of the Weston Solutions listed under the ownership banner on the [Union's website](#). The EPA identified and sought recompense from a list of companies that would be considered Wall Street royalty. They received it, to the tune of 2.7 million dollars, no small sum in 1983 - but far from the settlements of the other toxic disasters nation wide.

According to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), the most recent testing (2009) shows that the level of contaminants are equal to or lower than the levels projected in the initial remediation plan. As comforting as that sounds, several highly dangerous chemicals such as Benzene and Acetone are just barely below "acceptable" levels. The next required testing of the site is to take place in September of 2014.

There is an inherent risk involved with being a first responder - it's part and parcel of the job description, and none of those men and women would ever argue otherwise. The dangers encountered on that site went well beyond any definition of "reasonable" or "job related", yet they continued their duties without hesitation.

Surviving family members of several of the first responders who were both present at the Wade site fire and later died from exposure to the toxic chemicals have started a memorial fund. The purpose of the fund according to the groups [website](#) and email correspondence with one of the members is to raise money to build a memorial to honor those who paid the ultimate price. According to Ms. Bernice Swanson the group has a site in mind and has raised some money that is currently being held by the [Delaware County Fallen Fighters and EMS Memorial Committee](#), until the group can reach their goal and secure property to erect the memorial. Donations can be made via their site. It would be quite a testament to Union supporters if they could help to honor Chester's forgotten heroes just footsteps from where new ones are being made.
